



Tom Barrett
Mayor

Bevan K. Baker, FACHE
Commissioner of Health

Administration

Frank P. Zeidler Municipal Building, 841 North Broadway, 3rd Floor, Milwaukee, WI 53202-3653 phone (414) 286-3521 fax (414) 286-5990
web site: www.milwaukee.gov/health

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Contact: Sarah DeRoo

Office (414) 286-3548

Cell (414) 708-4060

**Mayor Barrett and City of Milwaukee Health Department
remind Milwaukee "It's not too late to get a flu shot"**

Flu season off to an early start nationwide

MILWAUKEE – As the holiday season gets into full swing, the City of Milwaukee is encouraging all to celebrate happy and *healthy* holidays by reminding residents that it's not too late to get a flu shot. The call comes as the Centers for Disease Control reports an early start to this year's flu season.

"The early start to this year's flu season coincides with a time of year where we gather with family and friends," said Mayor Tom Barrett. "I urge everyone over 6 months of age to visit their doctor or local clinic to get vaccinated today in order to protect themselves and their loved ones."

Influenza (the flu) is among the most common respiratory illnesses in the United States, infecting millions of people each year. The virus is spread through the air when someone who is sick coughs, sneezes, or speaks. Symptoms of seasonal flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, and fatigue. Though common, the flu can be serious, and it often leads to hospitalization and sometimes death in the most vulnerable populations including very young children, the elderly, and those with chronic illnesses.

"One of the challenges as flu season approaches is the uncertainty of the disease," said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker. "Each influenza season, different strains of the flu virus can spread, and they can affect people differently. That is why the single best way to protect yourself and your family is to get a flu shot."

The vaccine is recommended for all individuals over 6 months of age, especially those at greatest risk for serious complications including adults 65 and older, children younger than 5, and pregnant women.

The City of Milwaukee Health Department also encourages frequent hand washing, and covering coughs and sneezes with your sleeve to reduce the spread of germs. Those experiencing symptoms should remain home from work or school, get rest, and drink plenty of fluids.

This year, getting a flu shot is more convenient than ever. Many area health care providers as well as local retail pharmacies and City of Milwaukee Health Department clinics offer the vaccine.

For more information, visit www.milwaukee.gov/health.

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Think Health. Act Now!